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BFD gets \$200K grant for training tower

Skillman presents latest award Tuesday

BY MIKE RICKETTS

October 22, 2008

BEDFORD — City, county and state officials were at the Bedford Fire Department headquarters on Tuesday afternoon to help celebrate the second installment of a \$200,000 Indiana Department of Homeland Security grant for regional training.

The money, according to Bedford Fire Chief Scott Gillespie, will help pay for and install a fire training burn tower that should be in place at Murray Forest Park by mid-November.

“This doesn’t just benefit Bedford,” Gillespie said. “There are 1,320 firefighters who provide coverage for 346,000 residents who will train here.”

Helping Indiana Department of Homeland Security officials make the presentation was Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman, a Bedford native.

“It is great to be home and see so many friends,” Skillman said. “My staff often says, they can feel the stress melt away from me as we drive into southern Indiana.”

The grant — partially funded through state legislation that added a 5 percent charge to state fireworks — creates more important training for firefighters that also melts away a bit of Skillman’s stress.

“We (elected officials) are certainly indebted to these firefighters and first responders,” she added. “Our (elected officials’) service pales in comparison to all our first responders do for us on a daily basis.”

The training tower will be between the Fraternal Order of Police building and the Bedford Parks Department’s utility building, west of the park’s three softball diamonds.

The unit, manufactured by American Fire Training Systems, has an interior area of about 1,920 square feet. Among the facility’s features are rappel stations, non-burn doors and windows, roof hatches, interior and exterior stair units, a drop-down ladder, training decks, steel platforms with railings, floor drains, a forcible entry door and several large containers.

At the presentation Tuesday, Department of Homeland Executive Director Joe Wainscott praised the ability of government officials, the Indiana Fire Association and local departments to work together to create more crucial training opportunities.

“It is critically important that firefighters receive regular and consistent basic training courses,” Wainscott said. “In three short years, we have gone from 0 to 50 mph to provide quality training to firefighters, EMTs, police and first responders.”

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Bond increased for alleged arsonist

Friday, October 24, 2008

By IVY JACKSON, Times Staff Reporter

A Terre Haute man charged with arson Thursday had his bond increased Friday as officers continue to investigate a residential fire in Clay City Wednesday evening.

After reviewing the probable cause affidavit presented by Clay County Sheriff Department Chief Deputy Rob Gambill, Clay County Circuit Court Judge Joseph Trout increased Daniel T. Kopacz' bond from \$25,000 with no 10 percent allowed to a \$50,000 cash bond with no 10 percent allowed.

The Clay County Sheriff's Department informed The Brazil Times Thursday that Kopacz, 27, was charged with a class B felony arson charge, a class B felony burglary of a residence charge and resisting law enforcement after admitting to authorities his involvement in setting a fire at a residence located at 710 Nye St., Clay City, Wednesday.

Due to the ongoing investigation, officials said names of the victims will not be disclosed and the home, which has been in the same unidentified family for several generations, is probably an entire loss.

Officials also disclosed that a fire marshal with the Indiana Department of Homeland Security Division of Fire and Building Safety discovered a chemical substance similar to charcoal lighter fluid was potentially used as an accelerant in several areas of the home during a preliminary investigation Thursday morning.

Awaiting formal arraignment on the current charges, Kopacz remains incarcerated at the Clay County Justice Center while the investigation continues.

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Story URL: <http://www.thebraziltimes.com/story/1472731.html>

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The BRAZIL TIMES

Area man in custody for arson

Thursday, October 23, 2008

By IVY JACKSON, Times Staff Reporter

CLAY CITY -- A Terre Haute man is in custody at the Clay County Justice Center for his alleged involvement in a suspicious four-alarm fire Wednesday evening.

According to a press release issued by the Clay County Sheriff's Department, Daniel T. Kopacz, 27, Terre Haute, has been preliminarily charged with a class B felony arson, class B felony burglary of a residence and one count of resisting law enforcement after admitting to authorities his involvement in a residential fire in Clay City.

Officials told The Brazil Times 911 dispatchers were notified Wednesday that flames and smoke were shooting through the roof of a residence located at 710 Nye St., Clay City.

Clay City Assistant Police Chief Mick Neiswinger was one of the first officials to respond to the scene. Because it was initially unclear if anyone was inside the home, Neiswinger attempted to enter the home, but stopped when informed the resident was away.

Firefighters from Clay City, Center Point, Cory and Lewis Township Volunteer Fire Departments were dispatched to the scene of the fire. Within minutes, they were able to determine the fire was suspicious in nature and requested a fire marshal be contacted to investigate.

Firefighters remained on the scene for two hours to ensure the fire was out.

Meanwhile, Sgt./K-9 Handler Josh Clarke and Sheriff Mike Heaton were also on the scene investigating peculiar events surrounding the fire.

According to officials and the press release, it was confirmed that Kopacz, 27, lived at the residence up to two weeks prior to the fire. Also, on Monday, Oct. 20, Heaton responded to an undisclosed domestic issue between Kopacz and the homeowner.

Kopacz was at the fire scene, however, when Heaton approached him for questioning, he ran away. Clarke's partner, K-9 Officer Forrest, was released and detained Kopacz after a short chase.

Because Forrest uses a clamp and hold maneuver to subdue a suspect, a medical unit was called to the scene to check the suspect for injuries. Officials confirm that Kopacz sustained no injuries during the incident.

Kopacz was taken into custody and transported to the Clay County Justice Center and initially charged with the preliminary charge of resisting arrest.

Chief Deputy Rob Gambill questioned Kopacz about the fire. Kopacz admitted he set the fire, which caused extensive damage to the residence and the property outside.

Chief of Investigations for the Indiana Department of Homeland Security Division of Fire and Building Safety Fred Daffer investigated the fire scene Thursday. He determined the fire was not caused by any weather-related event or accidental cause from within the home.

However, Daffer discovered chemicals that could have been used as accelerants in areas of the home where the homeowner would not typically keep them.

A preliminary case report has been sent to the Clay County Prosecutor's Officer for review and further potential charges to be accessed.

According to jail officials, Kopacz is currently incarcerated on a \$25,000 cash bond with no 10 percent allowed (in accordance with the Clay County bond schedule) while awaiting formal arraignment per the court calendar.

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Story URL: <http://www.thebraziltimes.com/story/1472465.html>

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Training facility boosted by grant

Wednesday, October 22, 2008

By SHANNEN HAYES, Staff Writer

Firefighters in District 7 -- Putnam, Vigo, Clay, Park, Owen, Greene, Sullivan and Vermillion counties -- will be receiving realistic training thanks to two grants from Indiana Department of Homeland Security. There are 96 fire departments or 1,921 firefighters who will benefit from the \$102,295 grants.

The money will be used to build props and facilities such as a flashover chamber, car fire prop and fire hydrants among other things. These are realistic training exercises that will help save the lives of firemen in critical moments.

"We wouldn't be able to do this training without the grants," said Fire Chief Bill Newgent.

In the past, firefighters traveled to Terre Haute or Indianapolis to receive this training. A mobile training station has also been established for the more than 1,000 volunteer firefighters.

The county commissioners provided land for the training site. Very little money has been put into the project due to donations that have been made.

John Shafer, training coordinator for District 7, is responsible for writing the grants.

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Story URL: <http://www.bannergraphic.com/story/1471727.html>

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THE NEWS-DISPATCH

Saturday, October 25, 2008



\$100,000 grant aids fire training tower

Rick Richards

City Editor, The News-Dispatch

Saturday, October 25, 2008

MICHIGAN CITY - Mayor Chuck Oberlie and Fire Chief Dave Lamb announced Friday the Indiana Department of Homeland Security awarded the city a \$100,000 grant to build a regional fire training tower.

The three-story tower and accompanying "burn building" are under construction on city property near the water tower on the West Side just off Hitchcock Road.

Joseph Wainscott, Indiana Department of Homeland Security executive director, will be in Michigan City on Tuesday to present the grant to the fire department.

At the same time, the La Porte County Commissioners approved a \$10,000 contribution to the project to advance training opportunities for all county fire departments.

Assistant Fire Chief Chuck Gries said Michigan City will be the regional training center for all fire departments in Lake, Porter, Newton and Jasper counties.

Firefighter Kyle Kazmierczak, who researched the project and submitted the grant to the state, said once the tower is completed Michigan City will be one of 10 regional training sites in Indiana.

There is no other fire training site in northern Indiana. Kazmierczak said the closest is Indianapolis, but firefighters here have traveled to as far away as the Carolinas and California for training.

"Now, we will be able to stay here," Kazmierczak said.

With a 100-seat classroom available at the department's administrative building, 2510 E. Michigan Blvd., classroom work can be done there before completing the hands-on training at the tower.

Kazmierczak said the tower is 35 feet tall and measures 16 by 18 feet at the base. In addition, there will be a 14-foot by 16-foot "burn building" attached to the tower.

"That building will be heavily insulated and firefighters will be able to train on Class A combustibles," Kazmierczak said.

For instance, a living room or small business storage room can be simulated with couches, furniture or wooden pallets and can be ablaze so firefighters can experience fighting a real fire.

Temperatures in a fire like that, Kazmierczak said, can get to between 1,700 and 2,200 degrees.

The tower will allow firefighters to train on ventilating buildings, life saving, carrying hoses and people up and down stairs and search and rescue.

"All of the classes will be free to the other departments," Kazmierczak said, adding that requirement was part of the stipulation of the grant.

Not only will professional departments train at the tower, but volunteer departments from La Porte County and other counties can, too.

"Something like this can help reduce death and injuries among firefighters and will improve all of the departments' skills," Kazmierczak said.

Contact City Editor Rick A. Richards at news@thenewsd Dispatch.com

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Auditor, former sheriff believed dead in fire

NEWBERN, Ind. (AP) - Authorities believe two bodies found in a fire-gutted home early Wednesday are those of Bartholomew County Auditor Nancy McKinney and her husband, former county sheriff Jimmie McKinney.

Jimmie McKinney's identity was confirmed late Wednesday by Deputy Coroner Allen Smith, but he said Nancy McKinney's identification was pending DNA test results.

Both died from carbon monoxide poisoning due to smoke inhalation, he said.

One body was found in the hallway and one was found in the bedroom of the large log-cabin style home near Newbern, about 40 miles southeast of Indianapolis, Bartholomew County Sheriff Mark Gorbett said.

The cause and origin of the fire could not immediately be determined because of extensive damage to the home, authorities said. The state Fire Marshal's office was called to the scene.

"Until we determine otherwise, we are treating this as a potential crime scene. However, at this time, no foul play is suspected," Gorbett said.

The fire was reported before 3 a.m. by a passer-by who saw flames and smoke from the area of Indiana 9 and 46, he said. At least four volunteer fire departments battled the fire.

A neighbor, Johnny McCarter, told The Republic of Columbus that he woke up to the sounds of sirens and flashing emergency lights.

"When I came out, flames were above the tree tops," McCarter said.

He said he could also hear the sound of ammunition kept inside the home exploding from the fire.

"It's a bad deal," he said. "They've been great neighbors. Everybody out here looks out for each other."

Nancy McKinney was re-elected as auditor in 2006. She won her first term in 2002 after working 16 years as a deputy auditor.

Jimmie McKinney served three terms as Bartholomew County sheriff. His first two terms were from 1971-1978 and he held the office for a third term from 1983-1986.

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Winchester receives grant for fire training center

By BILL RICHMOND

City editor

The City of Winchester Thursday received an Indiana Department of Homeland Security grant for \$33,333 to help fund a fire and emergency response training center at the City Street Department building.

Winchester Mayor Steve Croyle said the training center, which includes apparatus already installed at the city street barn, is funded by Homeland Security, the city and other local emergency management agencies, as well as Silver Towne, Ohio Valley Gas, Ferrell Gas, Randolph County Plumbing, Culy Construction, American Electric Power and Burton Excavating. He said the training center will be used by all fire departments in the district.

"We need to make sure our fire personnel has the best training possible for their own safety, as well as for the safety of the public," Croyle said. "We especially appreciate that so many private sector donors realized this necessity and were willing to help out."

Winchester Fire Chief Bill Yost said the training center is something firefighters in the county have talked about and dreamed about for years.

"There's no way we could have pulled it off without the cooperation of the state and federal government and our corporate sponsors," Yost said.

Yost said the training facility is built so it can duplicate a variety of emergency response scenarios from private homes to business and industry. It will also have structures to duplicate silo and barn entrances to accommodate rural departments so they can practice their response to farm incidents.

"It's multi-faceted to train fire personnel for a variety of situations they may encounter," Yost said. "This includes electrical hazards and LP gas fires. We feel like we're covering as many bases as possible. This will be a safe environment to teach new firefighters and keep up the skills of department veterans. Without question, this is the best fire scenario training program I've ever seen."

District 33 State Representative Bill Davis (R-Portland) said creating the district training center is all about ensuring preparedness by our fire service.

Davis, a former firefighter and arson investigator, said he feels that as a legislator he can be of help to emergency responders and firefighters and be sure they're well trained and on top of their game.

"I appreciate what you folks do," Davis told firefighters and emergency responders. "It's vital to be sure we're the best we can be when the call comes through."

Department of Homeland Security branch chief John Buckman said one basic mission of the department is to develop basic mandatory training as a good foundation to help keep firefighters safe.

"We have made significant inroads to provide training," Buckman said. "We appreciate the effort here in Winchester to make this program a success."

Indiana Department of Homeland Security preparedness and training director Brad Thatcher said his department is very conscious of the needs of rural and volunteer fire services and is dedicated to providing them the resources to train with.

"There's only so much training you can simulate in the bay," Thatcher said. "This allows you to simulate realistic fire situations. With a facility like this, you will be able to do some awesome training. It is a remarkable accomplishment and we are proud to be a partner in it."

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FEMA site running in Floyd County

By **DANIEL SUDDEATH**

Daniel.Suddeath@newsandtribune.com

October 21, 2008 12:11 pm

— A sunny fall day greeted victims of last month's wind storm who sought financial recompense for the property damages they suffered.

Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, officials stationed at the Floyd County 4-H Fairgrounds along Green Valley Road served hundreds of residents from Floyd, Washington, Scott and Perry counties on Monday.

It was the first day FEMA and several state agencies accepted applications from the four latest counties to be declared disaster sites.

"We anticipated Floyd County would have quite a few people," said Bill Lehman, FEMA public affairs officer.

"The first day usually isn't the busiest. We imagine we'll have more people coming to the center once word gets out to the other counties."

The relief station accepts residential claims as the public sector of Floyd County has yet to be named eligible for disaster aid.

Applicants could receive up to \$28,800 from FEMA in the form of disaster grants for those whose homes have become uninhabitable or if major repairs were necessary.

Additionally, the Small Business Administration is offering loans that are also available to residents. SBA had approved nearly \$3 million in loans statewide as of Friday.

Residents could also be approved for food stamps to help with emergency expenses.

"Our goal is to get people back into their houses and make sure they're in conditions that are safe and sanitary and livable," Lehman said.

New Albany Mayor Doug England toured the site and said he's pleased with the turnout thus far.

"It's going smooth. There are a lot of people that are hurting — more than we thought," he said.

Lehman said approximately 6,000 people applied at the Clark County site last week in five days and they anticipate the number could be just as high, if not more, in Floyd County.

"People in Floyd County have been waiting for awhile," he said.

As for funding to help the city and county offset emergency expenses, England said a representative from Gov. Mitch Daniels' office assured him Floyd County stands a good chance of being approved based on precedence set in surrounding counties.

"He came in and said we have met the guidelines for the governor to ask the president. Now we're just waiting to hear back from the president," England said.

Federal agencies will review Floyd County's case before rendering a decision.

New Albany alone incurred nearly \$700,000 in costs from overtime pay for the police and fire departments coupled with contractual fees for debris removal services.

If approved, the county and city governments would receive 75 percent of expenses related to storm damage.

FEMA highlights

- What: FEMA's location for accepting applications from residents and business owners whose property was damaged during last month's wind storm.
- Where: Floyd County 4-H Fairgrounds, 2818 Green Valley Rd. in New Albany.
- Times: The center will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. through Saturday.
- Details: Residents from Floyd, Washington, Scott and Perry counties can apply for relief at the site. Along with FEMA, officials from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, Small Business Administration and the Family and Social Services Administration, among other agencies, are on hand to assist residents in making applications and getting grants and loans to offset expenses.

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Photos



New Albany resident Brandy Thomas holds her six-year-old daughter Kailyn, 6, and her application for disaster food stamps at the Floyd County 4-H Fairgrounds on Monday. The disaster food stamps, provided by FEMA, are intended to help local residents who lost food due to the wind storm that occurred last month. Staff photo by Kevin McGloshen



Rodney Haywood organizes people inside one of the buildings at the Floyd County 4-H Fairgrounds in New Albany as people fill out applications for disaster food stamps provided by FEMA on Monday. FEMA will remain at the fairgrounds for the remainder of the week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Staff photo by Kevin McGloshen



Floyd County residents wait in line to show their Indiana state I.D. to gain access to disaster food stamps on Monday at the Floyd County 4-H Fairgrounds in New Albany. Staff photo by Kevin McGloshen

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FEMA center closes Saturday in New Albany

By **MATT THACKER**

Matt.Thacker@newsandtribune.com

October 24, 2008 10:22 am

— The Federal Emergency Management Agency and Indiana Department of Homeland Security announced that through the end of the day Wednesday, more than \$23 million in disaster recovery grants had been approved for Indiana residents impacted by last month's storm. Of that, \$19.7 million was approved for housing.

FEMA reported that 20,698 Indiana residents have applied for assistance. The Small Business Association has approved more than \$7.2 million in loans for homeowners.

FEMA also reported that 28,709 residents have visited disaster recovery centers. Bill Lehman, FEMA public affairs officer, said that about 1,000 people on average per day are visiting the recovery center in Floyd County. The center will close Saturday.

The application deadlines for disaster unemployment assistance are Nov. 3 for Clark County residents and Nov. 17 for Floyd County residents. Applications are being taken online at www.dwd.in.gov/gov/2404.htm.

Free legal services for situations related to the storm are also available by calling 1-800-266-2581.

FEMA also stresses that some people may have been denied federal assistance because they did not give enough information with their application. Applicants who are denied assistance have 30 days to appeal the decision.

SO YOU KNOW

- **What:** FEMA's location for accepting applications from residents and business owners whose property was damaged during last month's wind storm.
- **Where:** Floyd County 4-H Fairgrounds, 2818 Green Valley Rd. in New Albany.
- **WHEN:** 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. through Saturday.
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